Unit .25

Session .04

Jesus Raises Lazarus

Scripture

John 11:20-27, 32-37,41-44

20 As soon as Martha heard that Jesus was coming, she went to meet him, but Mary remained seated in the house. **21** Then Martha said to Jesus, "Lord, if you had been here, my brother wouldn't have died. **22** Yet even now I know that whatever you ask from God, God will give you." **23** "Your brother will rise again," Jesus told her. **24** Martha said to him, "I know that he will rise again in the resurrection at the last day." **25** Jesus said to her, "I am the resurrection and the life. The one who believes in me, even if he dies, will live. **26** Everyone who lives and believes in me will never die. Do you believe this?" **27** "Yes, Lord," she told him, "I believe you are the Messiah, the Son of God, who comes into the world."… **32** As soon as Mary came to where Jesus was and saw him, she fell at his feet and told him, "Lord, if you had been here, my brother would not have died!" **33** When Jesus saw her crying, and the Jews who had come with her crying, he was deeply moved in his spirit and troubled. **34** "Where have you put him?" he asked. "Lord," they told him, "come and see." **35** Jesus wept. **36** So the Jews said, "See how he loved him!" **37** But some of them said, "Couldn't he who opened the blind man's eyes also have kept this man from dying?" … **41** So they removed the stone. Then Jesus raised his eyes and said, "Father, I thank you that you heard me. **42** I know that you always hear me, but because of the crowd standing here I said this, so that they may believe you sent me." **43** After he said this, he shouted with a loud voice, "Lazarus, come out!" **44** The dead man came out bound hand and foot with linen strips and with his face wrapped in a cloth. Jesus said to them, "Unwrap him and let him go."

Intro Options

Main Point:
Jesus grieves over death and foreshadows His own resurrection.

Option 1

Give each student a sheet of paper and some writing utensils (you can offer colored pencils or markers if your students want to make their work artsy). Ask each student to make a list: "Top Ten Ways to Glorify Jesus." Give them some time to consider their lists and then to draw them up. Then ask them to share. See if anyone's list included anything about glorifying Jesus through suffering or even death. Tell them that in today's lesson, they'll see how trusting God in sickness and even death shows how great and glorious He is.

Option 2

Your students have been hired to write a how-to guide: "The Guide on How to Show Your Authority." If they want to ham it up, they can make it a guide for a specific perspective: "The Coach's Guide on How to Show Your Authority;" "The Band Director's Guide on How to Show Your Authority," etc.

They should create either a pamphlet/book or a skit/video giving people advice on how to show authority. They can make their productions humorous or serious; whatever they'd most enjoy.

Let folks show what they came up with. Hopefully, one theme will have been using authority to show power over something. In today's lesson, Jesus will show His authority: not through coercion, not through demands, not through power-grabbing, but rather by showing his authority over death in raising Lazarus.

TEACHING PLAN

Read John 11:20-27.

It seems like both of Lazarus' sisters knew Jesus had the power to save their brother. They both affirmed the fact that if Jesus were there, their brother would not have died.

Jesus' response to Martha opens the door to something humans have been longing for ever since they began fearing death—namely, an escape from it. How can we finally conquer this insatiable enemy that always gets the last word? The One who sovereignly sanctioned death as the wages for sin can sovereignly conquer death by making payment for those wages Himself. He can undo death. He can kill death.

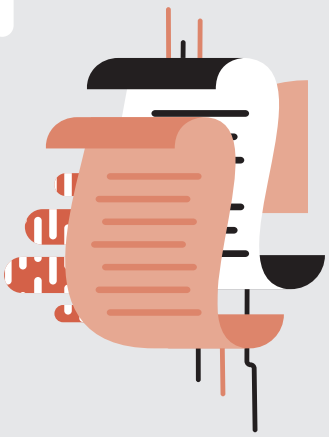
The words Jesus spoke to Martha are true for us today. Jesus is still the resurrection and the life. When you and I trust in what He accomplished on the cross to pay for our sin, we are given everlasting life and it already belongs to us. His resurrection life is ours. We often say that "Jesus gives life," but this passage reminds us that we can also say "Jesus is life."

- **What's so surprising about Jesus' delay?**
- **Why should we be mindful of God's perfect timing when it comes to difficult circumstances?**

Read John 11:32-37.

Like Martha, Mary laments Jesus' late arrival. She just knew He could have saved her brother's life. The scene is a dramatic one, and heavy. And it all comes down to a fine point on the shortest verse in the entire Bible, John 11:35: "Jesus wept."

- **What does the fact that Jesus wept communicate about His character?**



99 Essential Doctrines (p. 32, DDG)

Resurrection

Both the Old and New Testaments teach that one day believers will experience a resurrection of the body from the dead (Isa. 26:19; Ezek. 37:12-14; John 11). The promise of the resurrection is found in the resurrection of Christ from the dead, and it will take place at the future return of Christ. Because Christ was the firstfruits of the resurrection, Christians can be assured that their resurrection will be similar in nature, meaning it will be both bodily and glorious (Phil. 3:20-21; Rom. 8:22-23). The hope of the future resurrection gives Christians confidence that death has been defeated in the death and resurrection of Christ.

COMMENTARY

Main Point:
Jesus grieves over death and foreshadows His own resurrection.

John 11

1-7. Lazarus was sick, at the point of death. It's easy to understand the feelings his family might have had: They wanted their brother to live. What's more, they knew the person capable of making that happen: Jesus.

This family (Mary, Martha, and Lazarus) knew Jesus well. He had stayed in their home and had eaten meals with them. They were not only His followers, but also His friends. They had seen what He did for people who needed healing, so Lazarus' family knew Jesus had the power to heal.

Did Lazarus' family want Jesus to know about his sickness and do something about it right then? Absolutely. However, Jesus had a different plan. Jesus told His followers Lazarus' sickness wouldn't end in death, and then He even stayed where He was for two more days.

Even though Jesus knew how things would turn out, He wanted His friends to find their trust in God. Trust begins with believing that God knows our situation and cares about us. Through this miracle, Jesus showed us that God wants us to trust Him no matter the situation.

20-27. This passage refers to a reality too frequently missed from the Christian's understanding of death: the resurrection of the body. Now, to be a Christian, you have to believe in Christ's bodily resurrection. But it is our future resurrection, the one that Martha referenced in verse 24, that is today sadly misunderstood or even ignored. Some of us might have grown up believing that if we place our trust in Jesus, when we die we will get to go to heaven with Him forever. And that's true. But it's not the end of the story. The hope of the Christian is not having their disembodied spirit vacuumed up into some paradise in outer space. The hope of the Christian is the Second Coming of Christ when He will establish a restored earth—heaven in effect coming to earth—with all His saints receiving restored bodies. It will be truly us as we were made to be, but we will finally be free of sin, of anxiety, of sickness, of pain, and of death.

In Defense (p. 34, DDG)

"Jesus identifies with us in our pain and loss. He comes to us in our weakness and brokenness. Though he knew he was about to raise Lazarus from the dead, Jesus wept when he saw the tears of Mary and her companions. This is Jesus being truly human. As God incarnate, Jesus shows us what he, as God, created man to be—a whole-hearted lover of God and a compassionate lover of fellow image-bearers—summarized in the two great commandments (Matt. 22:34-40). But as the incarnate God, Jesus' tears in front of Lazarus's tomb are of a different order. This is Jesus feeling the weight of the fall—the violation and disintegration of the way things were meant to be. His holy tears are those of the Creator grieving over the forfeiture of beauty through the intrusion of sin and death. Once again, in the incarnate Lord, we see the heart of the Lamb who would offer his life to overcome our sin and death." [1]

TEACHING PLAN

Jesus is not disconnected from those He loves. He does not deal with us in abstractions, but from a personal investment in our lives. There are depths of meaning in the words "Jesus wept." The extent of the incarnation itself is held in those two words. In Hebrews 4:15, we are told that Jesus was tempted as we are (yet without sin), so He is able to sympathize with our weaknesses. How human was Jesus? The answer is, *fully*. Moved by the loss of Lazarus and the deep grief of His friends, Jesus enters into their suffering with them. It is a picture of the greater sorrow to come—the grievous death of the cross waiting for Him on the horizon of His ministry.

- **In what ways does it comfort you to know that Jesus grieves death?**

Of course, Jesus didn't just grieve over the sadness of the scene. The Creator of humanity feels anger and grief over the consequences of sin and death in our world. We do not experience life the way God originally intended. And as God's image-bearers, our grief over sin and death reflects His hatred of sin and death. The good news is that grief was not Jesus' last word or action in this passage.

Read John 11:41-44.

Imagine the scene here. Lazarus had been dead for four days. Those around the tomb probably held their noses. A four-day-old body would have certainly smelled—at least, you would expect it to. But in this case, something different happened. Jesus asked for the tomb to be opened, and it was. Jesus then called out for Lazarus to walk out of the tomb. And sure enough, Lazarus walked out—still wearing the clothes he was buried in.

Think about it. We talk often about Jesus having all power. However, here we see His power extend to the unbelievable action of resurrecting someone who was dead. He placed oxygen back into Lazarus' lungs. He restarted his heart. The brain that should have been damaged by death came back to life not only to function, but to have memory of the life he lost and of those he loved.

Lazarus did not pep-talk himself out of that tomb. He could do nothing to save himself. He needed a resurrecting word from the Lord. This very real, historical raising is therefore a good metaphorical picture of what happens to each of us when we pass from death to life, from darkness to light. We cannot save ourselves from the curse of death. We need Christ's intervention. Praise God, then, that He stands at the mouth of the tomb of our dead heart and calls out to us in His powerful grace, "Come forth!"

The miraculous raising is a beautiful picture of the new birth of any sinner. Freedom from death comes from the good news of Jesus. His power turns the dead into the living. And this freedom starts even now. It is not just a "ticket to heaven" when we die. It is the gift of eternal life at the moment of salvation. When we believe upon Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of sins and the gift of eternity, we become liberated then and there from the curse of the law and the death it pronounces.

- **How will the truth of Jesus' love for you and His gift of salvation affect the way you respond to difficulties in your life today?**

COMMENTARY

Main Point:
Jesus grieves over death and foreshadows His own resurrection.

John 11

32-37. What John's Gospel appears to be addressing, at least implicitly, is a kind of Gnostic heresy that believes flesh is evil at best and an illusion at worst and therefore contends Jesus was God but not really a man. And John's Gospel proclaims the Word became flesh and dwelt among us (John 1:14).

John's entire Gospel clarifies the historical truth that the Son of God became one of us because the human predicament is so dire it requires nothing less than the actual space-time intervention of the God of the universe. John 11, in particularly, shows us that this intervention was an adoption of the entire human experience.

44. The God who created life *ex nihilo* ("out of nothing") creates new life out of death. Just as God spoke life into existence with a word, just as He breathed life into man made out of the dust of the ground, the God-Man utters a life-giving word into the darkened tomb, "breathing" life into the decaying-into-dust corpse of Lazarus.

"Lazarus comes out still 'bound with bandages on his feet and hands, and his face wrapped in a cloth,' so that Jesus has to give 'the crowd standing around' yet another command, 'Loosen him, and let him go' (v. 44). Despite the rich symbolism, this is a resuscitation, not a resurrection. Later, when Jesus himself is raised, the contrast will be self-evident, for the stone will be already 'taken away from the tomb' (20:1), Jesus' body nowhere to be seen, and only 'the linen cloths lying, and the cloth which had been over his face not with the linen cloths, but rolled up by itself in one place' (20:7). The so-called 'resurrection' of Lazarus is but a sign of future resurrection (see 12:18), not the event itself. The promise to Martha that her brother 'will rise' still awaits 'the resurrection at the last day' (vv. 23-24). For the moment, Lazarus is not being ushered into the age to come, but simply received back into everyday life."[2]

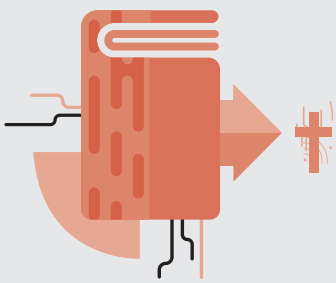
Activity

One of the points from today's lesson was how we glorify Jesus by trusting Him in sickness and even death. Your group will produce tracts to pass out at hospitals and hospices. They should take the principles from today's lesson and try to put them into short, compassionate explanations for those in suffering.

See what they come up with and let them share. Point out examples that are particularly gracious or excellent. How can we show our trust is in God in anything from colds and sore throats up to life-threatening or terminal diseases?

(p. 33, DDG) Christ Connection

When Jesus raised Lazarus from the dead, He showed that He has power over death. Jesus said, "I am the resurrection and the life." Because Jesus died on the cross and rose from the dead, we have full assurance that Jesus will one day defeat death forever and resurrect us from the dead.



JESUS RAISED LAZARUS

John 11:20–27, 32–37, 41–44

JESUS RAISED LAZARUS

Jesus grieves over death and foreshadows His own resurrection.

JESUS CONNECTION

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LIFEWISE QUALITY

CONFIDENCE – Trusting in God's goodness and character no matter what.

HEAD

What did Martha say that displayed her trust in Jesus, even when she didn't fully understand His plan?

What did Jesus pray would happen as a result of raising Lazarus from the dead?

HEART

Read John 11:1-7, 11-15. Jesus knew Lazarus was sick but waited two days to travel to Bethany. What reasons does Jesus give for delaying the trip? How does His delay help you to trust in God's perfect timing when life is very difficult?

In John 11:26, Jesus declared that anyone who trusts in Him will never die. How does this truth give you confidence when you think about death?

HANDS

Choose one option below:

1. When things don't go well, we can lose confidence. We doubt our ability to handle new or difficult situations. But we can build confidence by facing those new or hard things and learning from our mistakes. In what areas do you lack confidence? Choose one area and write down 3 practical steps you can take this week to build your confidence. Ask God to increase your confidence and do each step.

2. Proverbs 3:5–6 says, "Trust in the Lord with all your heart and do not rely on your own understanding; think about Him in all your ways, and He will guide you on the right paths." We can easily put our confidence in things that aren't God. Make a list of 3–5 things you often trust in instead of God. Pray and ask God to help you notice when you rely on something other than Him this week and help you put your trust in Him.